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Do Coping Mechanisms Affect the Quality of Life in Adolescents Who Have Experienced Trauma?

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BACKGROUND:

Community violence thus strongly affects adolescents' state of mind. Coping strategies, however, can play a positive role in adolescents' adjustment after experiencing these traumatic episodes (Dempsey, Overstreet & Moely, 2000). Coping styles vary greatly depending on the individual and the type of stressor, and the particular coping style influences subsequent life satisfaction (MacCann, Lipnevich, Burrus, & Roberts, 2012). Youths who employ positive coping mechanisms, such as *positive reframing*, have more positive reactions and outcomes after experiencing violent victimization (Dempsey et al., 2010).

HYPOTHESES:

2. Positive reframing will moderate the relationship between victimization and life satisfaction, such that adolescents who engage in positive reframing will be less influenced by victimization.

PARTICIPANTS:

DESIGN:

MEASURES:

- Childhood Life Satisfaction – Wave 4

- Positive Reframing – Wave 4

From *Children's Coping Strategies Checklist*; Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$

Supporting Hypothesis 1a, life satisfaction was negatively correlated with victimization.

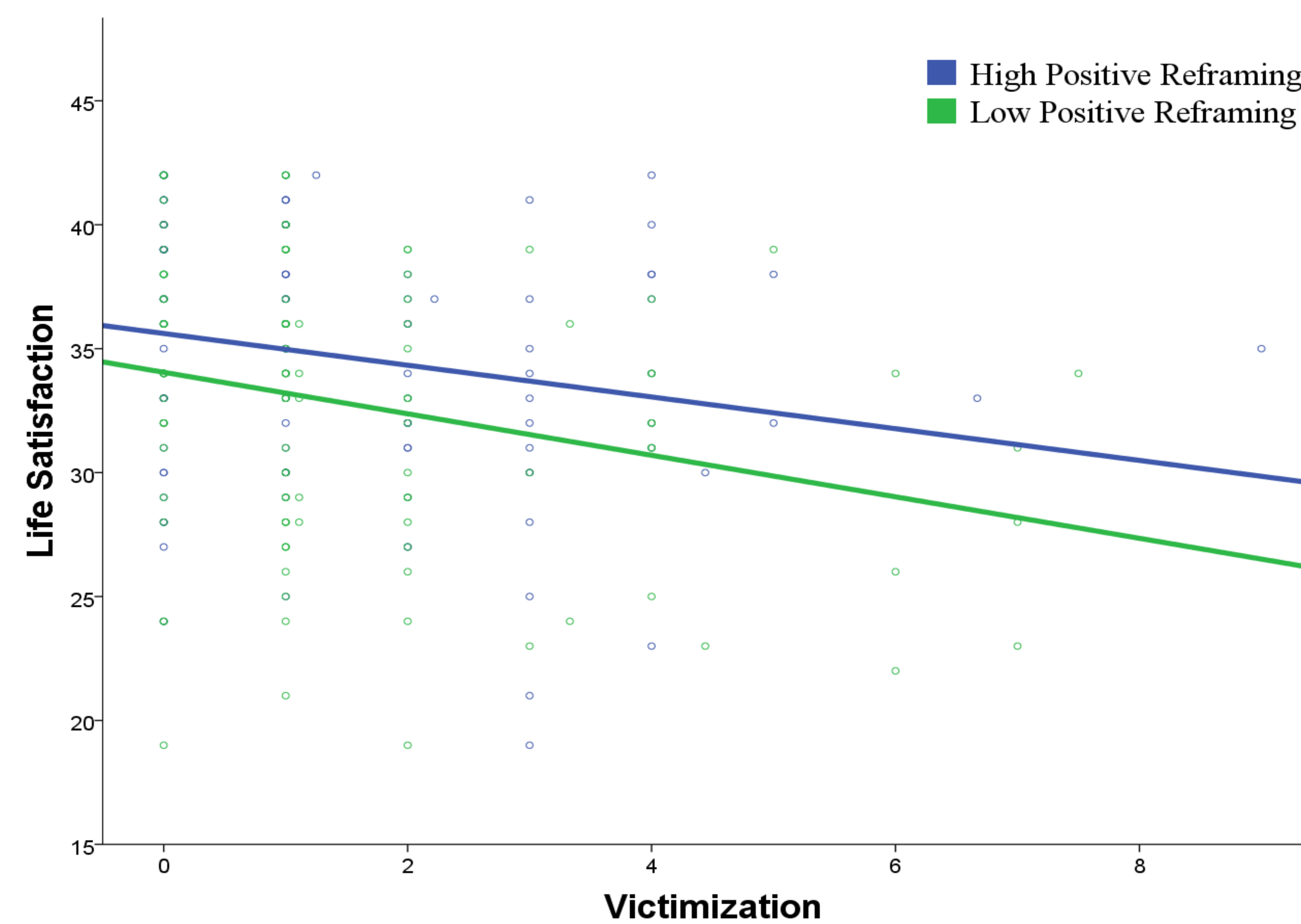
Supporting Hypothesis 1b, life satisfaction was positively correlated with positive reframing.

There was no significant relationship between victimization and positive reframing.

Measure	1	2	3
1. Life satisfaction			
N = 247	-		
M = 33.83, SD = 5.32			
2. Victimization			
N = 356	-.24**	-	
M = 1.53, SD = 1.77			
3. Positive reframing			
N = 242	.25**	-.06	-
M = 29.01, SD = 9.20			

** $p < .01$

The below figure shows that there was a decrease in life satisfaction as victimization increases. Moreover, adolescents who were more likely to use positive reframing as a coping strategy had higher life satisfaction than those who were less likely to use positive reframing. However, the relationship between life satisfaction and victimization was not moderated by positive reframing.



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Regression Model 1 indicates that victimization was a significant predictor of life satisfaction. Although positive reframing, on its own, was positively correlated to life satisfaction, adding it to Model 2 did not make the model significantly more predictive. Further, Model 3 indicates that positive reframing did not moderate the relationship between life satisfaction and victimization, thus providing no support for Hypothesis 2.

Variable	B	SE	β	ΔR^2
Model 1				.09**
Victimization	-1.01	.35	-.30**	
Model 2				.01
Victimization	-1.04	.35	-.31**	
Positive reframing	1.16	1.11	.11	
Model 3				.02
Victimization	-1.23	.37	-.36**	
Positive reframing	1.54	1.13	.14	
Victimization * Reframing	1.10	.74	.16	

** $p < .01$

Conclusion

LIMITATIONS:

Due to the nature of the survey questions, social desirability bias may have played a role in the lack of responses from some participants. The questions touched on sensitive issues such as sexual activity, and the adolescents may have felt uncomfortable responding honestly. Moreover, it is difficult to assess life satisfaction at a young age (9-16), and over 30% of the adolescents did not complete the Life Satisfaction Checklist. The adolescents surveyed in this study generally reported a low number of incidents involving victimization, therefore limiting the range of results.

FUTURE RESEARCH:

Despite these limitations, these results shed light on victimization relating to life satisfaction. The negative correlation between these two variables exposes the dire need for future research in the effects of trauma on adolescents. The researchers believe that with a longitudinal study that follows adolescents over time, and a broader sample size, these results could aid in improving life satisfaction in adolescents who have experienced victimization.